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AUTHOR Schiffrin, Deborah
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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the role of paraphrase in the cohesion of everyday oral discourse suggests that combining two methodological approaches to discourse analysis, using distribution of specific discourse elements and sequential relationships within discourse, creates a more empirical foundation for analysis, leading to a more accurate formulation of the process of producing a cohesive discourse, and eventually to resolution of more general and abstract questions. The discussion is based on 255 paraphrase sequences, discourses in which a speaker paraphrases an already presented proposition after some other discourse material. It is suggested that paraphrases have four functions (intensification, subordination, transition marking, and conversational indexing), and the functions concern very different levels of discourse organization. It is also proposed that a single paraphrase may be used in more than one way, and that the functions cannot always be defined as mutually exclusive, suggesting that the customary practice of separating different sources of cohesion in discourse may not reflect speakers' own methods for producing and understanding orderly discourse, and hence that there is a need to focus more on the relationships between sources of cohesion. (MSE)

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COHESION IN EVERYDAY DISCOURSE:
THE ROLE OF PARAPHRASE

by

Deborah Schiffrin
Georgetown University

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A central goal of discourse analysis is to identify and explain the difference between an orderly discourse and a disorderly sequence of randomly arranged sentences. Depending on our view of discourse, we can locate the source of order at different levels of analysis. If we view discourse as a collection of propositions, for example, we may locate the source of its unity at the level of semantic relationships which underlie the actual text (e.g. Halliday and Hasan 1976; see also much of the work on discourse modelling in the field of artifical intelligence, e.g. Hobbs 1977). If we examine the structure of discourse, we may find that a sense of order is produced through sequential arrangements of, and hierarchical relationships between, constituent sentences (e.g. Linde and Goguen 1978, van Dijk 1972). Or, If we focus on the pragmatic function of discourse--and its use in conversation and social interation--we may find that connections lie not between propositions or sentences at all, but between the actions which are realized through the utterances in a discourse (e.g. Labov 1972a, Labov and Fanshel 1977).

Scholars who have focused on one or another of these levels have, of course, acknowledged that the overall cohesion of a discourse is created by connections between the elements on all of these levels, and, by relationships between propositions, sentences, and actions--relationships between what is meant, what is said, and what is done. Van Dijk (1972), for example, in his work on the development of formal rules for generating acceptable discourse, acknowledges that interpretation of discourse is also determined by pragmatic, referential, and non-linguistic aspects of communication (developed further, in van Dijk 1976).

What previous analysts have been less eager to do is isolate a particular discourse phenomenon, and actually examine all occurrences of that phenomenon in a specific corpus, in order to determine its role in producing and reflecting cohesion. Halliday and Hasan (1976), for example, suggest that particular items such as pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, and repetition contribute to discourse cohesion by showing an interpretive link between two parts of the discourse. Despite the intuitive appeal of this suggestion and of many of their examples, however, they do not base their conclusions on the item's overall distribution within a given corpus. And although Hasan (1979) realizes that cohesion is produced through connections between actions as well as meanings, this realization does not become the basis for a method of analysis which considers the semantic, structural, and conversational context of each cohesive item.

I will suggest through my discussion of the role of paraphrase in the cohesion of everyday discourse that combining these two methodological approaches--what I have in Schiffrin (1981) called distributional and sequential accountability--creates a more expirical foundation for discourse analysis, which then leads to a more accurate formulation of the process of producing a cohesive discourse, and eventually, to the resolution of more general and abstract questions.

My discussion is based on a corpus of 255 paraphrase sequences: discourses in which a speaker paraphrases an already presented proposition after some other discourse material. In other words, I am focusing on paraphrases (referentially equivalent propositions) which are <u>not</u> adjacent to one another.[1] I am also limiting myself to paraphrases within the talk of a single speaker, not paraphrases of what one's interlocutor has said. All of my data come from sociolinguistic interviews carried out during fieldwork in a lower middle class Jewish neighborhood in Philadelphia, as part of a project on linguistic change and variation, headed by William Labov.

Functions of Paraphrase

One function of paraphrase is intensification. I've suggested by the diagram in A that there are two ways that speakers c use paraphrase sequences to intensify a point: add intensifying material between the proposition and its paraphrase; modify the parphrase.

A. prior discourse (Proposition 1 intervening discourse Paraphrase 1+) following discourse.

Start with the insertion of modifying material between the proposition and its paraphrase. We can see two examples of this in 1:

1 See this one right here?
He's smart.
He himself don't think he's smart,
but he's smart.
He came in first in plumbing,
out of a hundred thirty five,
He was the only Jewish kid.
He came in first.

What occurs between the two utterances of he's smart is a negative, he himself don't think he's smart, whose juxtaposition with the affirmative emphasizes the speaker's boast by highlighting its affirmative content (on the evaluative function of negatives, see Labov 1972b).

We find another paraphrase in 1, he came in first. Here the speaker adds information--out of 135, he was the only Jewish kid--which increases the uniqueness of that accomplishment. This intensification also allows him to reaffirm his ethnic and religious identity--an identity which is a basis for much of his pride about himself and his family.

2 and 3 illustrate other ways that intervening discourse can intensify the paraphrased proposition:

2 She said "I want you to break it off right now."
As true as I'm sitting here
she broke it off just like that.

In 2, the speaker attempts to increase his hearer's confidence in the truth and authenticity of the reported quote (I want you to break it off right now) by proclaiming his own sincerity (as true as I'm sitting here). Such metalinguistic phrases are frequent between a proposition and its paraphrase (for other organizational and evaluative uses of meta-talk, see Schiffrin 1980).

3 illustrates that speakers insert other kinds of "glossing" information, or meta-comments, between a proposition and its paraphrases:

3 J: Everybody who is knowledgeable ...
don't have t'be talented, or artistic even,
but knowledgeable about music can tell who the composi-
who the composition is by.
Right? I mean this is no big feat!
F: I think so! I think it's-
J: No., Seriously. No.
F: I think it's a biggie.
J: No. No.

In 3, J is "modestly" disagreeing with F's praise for his knowledge of music. The strength of J's disclaimer and his denial of that praise is reinforced through seriously, as well as through the duplication of no after F's insistent praise.

Returning to 1 for a moment, we can see other ways that speakers intensify propositions--in the paraphrase itself. In both he's smart and he came first, the speaker shifts the stress to the attribute about which he is boasting (smart and first). We can see a similar stress shift in 4:

4 I blame the- there's something in that college that does it.
A way of thinking.
Because it changed my older son thinking for awhile.
There's something there that changes a kid's opinion.
It really does.
And I'd rather have them in the labor than have 'em the other way.

In 4, the speaker shifts the stress to the factor which is being blamed for the changes which he has observed (college, i.e. there). We also see in 4 that intensifying material can follow immediately upon the paraphrase (it really does).

Let's go on now to the second function of paraphrase: subordination of the intervening discourse. This is similar in one way to intesification, because in both of these functionally differentiated sequences, the proposition and its paraphrse provide the main "point" of the discourse.[2] In discussing intensification, however, we focused on the intensive force of the point itself, and relatedly, the speaker's orientation to that point, e.g. commitment, emphasis. In discussing subordination, we'll focus more on the topical organization, and hierarchical information structure of the discourse--both of which are associated with the point. I've suggested by the diagram in B that the proposition and its paraphrase "enclose", and thus subordinate, the intervening discourse:

B. prior discourse (Proposition 1 intervening discourse Paraphrase 1) following discourse.

Consider, then, 5:

5 That don't add up!
But, in my father's house, we were not taught hate.
Never did we ever say this damned Catholic,
or that damned Protestant,
or that damned nigger or- or anything-
it was proven for a fact
that my father took a colored man off the street,
and he didn't have a place to sleep,
/two more examples .../
So we were not hate.
But, I went into the army,
a- and I felt the hostility in some people.

The speaker in 5 is establishing a general point (we were not taught hate, i.e. were not prejudiced) by listing a series of specific instances which provide evidence for that generalization. He then restates his newly warranted generalization, so we were not hate.

The speaker in 6 is establishing a point in a similar way:

6 We're the bad guys in the world, right now.
We're the- we don't know it,
we're living here.
But that- if you took- too it- if you went around,
took a consensus from country to country,
you'd find out that
we're the bad guys in the world!

Note that in this example, the speaker draws on hypothetical rather than actual evidence; but again, he repeats his point (we're the bad guys in the world) after that evidence. In short, in both 5 and 6, the paraphrased proposition is the central point of the discourse; the intervening discourse supports that point, and is thus, an informationally subordinate part of the discourse. (For fuller discussion of paraphrase and repetition in both rhetorical and conversational argument, see Schiffrin, forthcoming, and in progress.)

I have found many similar discourse sequences--of position and support, statement and reason--and overwhelmingly, it is what is being supported or explained which is paraphrased. 7 is an exception:

7 F: I knew you were gonna say it! hhh'ih
J: Some people- What? Y'knew it?
Why? How'd y' know I was gonna say it?
F: hhhh Cause!
J: There's a reason.
J: There's a reason why.
They were put upon for three thousand years,
so therefore ... this hatred really rubbed off on them
because they had taken it for three thousand years.

In 7, the speaker J is "goaded into" providing a reason for his prior statement (that Jews are the most prejudiced ethnic group) by F's boast of shared and privileged knowledge of the intention behind J's statement. J's reason, then, maintains his status as the speaker who is primarily responsible for his statement--because he is the only one with access to the "real" reason for that statement. 7 is an exception to the pattern noted above in which

statements are paraphrased--rather than reasons--but we have found an interactional motivation for this exception. Note, also, how J marks this sequence metalinguistically (There's reason. There's a reason why) making explicit, in other words, the fact that a usually subordinate part of the discourse is being presented in a position of marked focus.

The organization of paraphrase sequences into hierarchically related parts (such as position and support, and statement and reason) as illustrated in 5 and 6 has structural correlates. Examine the data in 8:

8

	intervening discourse	paraphrase 1	total
and	8	38	46
so	1	30	31
but	6	50	56
because	27	1	28
total	42	119	161

Table 8 shows that there are 161 paraphrase sequences in which the clause which begins the intervening discourse, and the clause which begins the paraphrase, are both headed by conjunctions. Looking first at the coordinate conjunctions (and, so, but) we can see that most of them (118 out of a total of 133) precede the paraphrase. This distribution is reversed for the subordinate conjunction because--which precedes the paraphrase in only 1 case out of total of 28 occurrences.

Example 9 and 10 illustrate another kind of subordination, which I won't go into in detail here.

9 So we get t'29th and Girard,
we live on 41st and Girard,
so we g- get t'29th and Girard,
he says ti'me eh: ...

10 They did terrible- the Italian family did-
it's not because they're Italian
because there are- some Italians are love'y
but this one Italian family did terrible things to the Jewish family.

Just briefly, there are two kinds of repair illustrated here: informational in 9 and expressive in 10. In both cases the repair is a less prominent part of the discourse--it is inserted as a side comment--after which the speaker returns to develop further the interrupted discourse.

Another function of paraphrase is transition marking. As I indicate in C, this is slightly different from both intensification and subordination, because the paraphrase sequence does not seem to be as much of a single discourse unit, establishing one point. Rather, the paraphrase seems to be leading into a new phase of the discourse, in which the speaker uses the proposition in a slightly different way.

C. prior discourse (Proposition 1 - intervening discourse - Paraphrase 1) following discourse.

Consider 11 as an example of transition marking:

11 My husband's a stickler for that.
More so than I am, really, y'know.
They would leave a little bit,
but I know like last week,
one of my sons, he couldn't finish his food,
but he wanted a chocolate pudding with whipped cream on it.
And he wouldn't let him have it.
He's murder hhhh
I think he's a little bit more stricter than I am, really.
Because that's the kind of home he came from.

In 11, the speaker says my husband's a stickler for that (i.e. making kids finish dinner before they can have dessert) More so than I am, really. She then gives an example illustrating and supporting that statement. After she repeats it, however, (He's murder. I think he's a little bit more stricter than I am, really), she gives the reason for the state represented by the proposition--not, as before, the evidence supporting her presentation of the proposition. In short, she shifts--after her paraphrase--to a slightly different mode of discourse in which she explains the content of her talk, rather than justifying the talk itself.

12 is parallel:

12 See, she is at the point now where she really doesn't
run out that much so that there-
she's not driving a car or anything.
We did have it with the boys,
uh: They weren't- they- y
when they first started t'drive,
they did have t'be in by twelve,
because they had a learner's permit.
We always did tell the boys ...
I always stressed that
because I went through more with the boys
than I did with Joy.

In 12, the discourse between the proposition and its paraphrase is support for the speaker's presentation of the proposition; after the paraphrase, is the reason for the event represented by the proposition.

The final function of paraphrase is conversational indexing: the speaker paraphrases a proposition which acts as a response to an interlocutor's request after having provided a fuller--but less obviously liked--response. These paraphrases provide a kind of "index" back to the prior discourse, showing the location of connections in a conversational dialogue. The diagram in D suggests this function:

D. prior discourse (Proposition 1 - intervening discourse - Paraphrase 1) following discourse.

Examples 14 through 16 illustrate speakers indexing their responses to requests for information. In 14, the response is indexed after a brief explanation for the response:

14 /Have you traveled much outside of Philadelphia?/
Just eh: just while I was eh: during the war,
and the only place I do travel is t'Ventnor, New Jersey.
We have a home there
and that's the only place I travel.

In 15, the response is indexed after a narrative illustrating that response:

15 /Has there ever been any time when you were really afraid
for your children?/
Oh yeh I had a time.
My oldest son was: ten and a half.
And he had an emergency a- ap- appendix.
/story reporting son's experience with doctor and hospital/
oh, that was the time. Yeh.

16 is slightly more complex because it contains a nested paraphrase, in which the inner paraphrase is the intervening material for the outer one:

16 /Would you say this is a friendly block?/
Fairly friendly. Wouldn't you say?
We're a little bit prejudiced, I think.
Ah: because we've been here so long
that we don't even remember the original groups that were here.
So we're bad to judge.
But I would say fairly, fairly friendly.

In 16, the speaker answers the question with fairly friendly, then claims that he is really not qualified to answer (we're a little bit prejudiced, I think). He explains his lack of qualification (because we've been here so long) and then restates his claim (so we're bad to judge). Then, he reiterates his initial response to the question (but I would say fairly friendly). It is the outer paraphrase, then, which indexes to the question: note also the repetition of the modal + verb (would say) from the question in this outer paraphrase--a clear indication of the link established between this paraphrase and the question in the dialogue.

Finally, 17 illustrates that it is not only requests for information to which responses can be indexed:

17 H: You don't understand why it was done that way. Because-
I: Oh Henry, you wouldn't do it!
H: uh I:
I: I don't care whether you like it or not!
H: Now just a minute! Now just a minute!
I: You wouldn't do it.
H: Now just a minute.

The speaker I indexes a rebuttal (Oh Henry, you wouldn't do it!) to H's challenge to her prior point (they are arguing about whether parents are ever justified in disowning their children because of an intermarriage, H taking the positive side, I taking the negative side). The use of paraphrase to index conversational moves in an argument, e.g. defenses, challenges, rebuttals, is particularly complex--it is a way of negotiating between order and disordering--but I won't have time to develop it here (see Schiffrin, forthcoming)

In sum, I've suggested that paraphrases have four functions: intensification, subordination, transition marking, conversational indexing. In discussing these functions, I've talked about propositional meaning, textual organization of discourse, and speech acts and conversational moves. Thus, I've shown that a single discourse item not only has different functions, but that those functions concern very different levels of discourse organization. One form, more than one function.

Two observations may have become apparent in the preceding discussion. First, a single paraphrase may be used in more than one way. For example, in 4, the paraphrase there's something there that changes a kids opinion not only intensified the speaker's point (through the stress on there) but it subordinated the support which the speaker presented for the statement (because it changed my older son thinking for awhile), and it indexed that statement to a request for information which had been made earlier in the discourse--a request for the speaker's explanation for his observed differences between his own values and his children's values.

Second, the functions which I've discussed cannot always be defined as mutually exclusive. We can see this functional overlap in 5: the paraphrase we were not hate was the general point of the discourse and the intervening discourse supported that point through a series of specific instances

examplifying the generalization. But, by supporting his point in this way, the speaker also intensified his presentation of that point because giving supporting evidence for a point is a way of showing one's commitment to a particular position.

These observations about mutliple uses, and non-unique functions, of paraphrase are borne out by my attempt to identify the role of each paraphrase in my total corpus of paraphrase sequences: in the 255 paraphrase sequences which I examined, I found only 38 sequences in which I could pinpoint only a single role for the paraphrase. In other words, 177 of the paraphrases were serving more than one role apiece.

What this means, I suggest, is that the more customary practice of separating different sources of cohesion in discourse may not really reflect speakers' own methods for producing and understanding orderly discourse. In order to explain speakers' own discourse procedures, then, we may need to focus more on the relationships between sources of discourse cohesion--relationships between what is meant, what is said, and what is done.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Paraphrases include, of course, repetition. My initial interest was in repetition, but exact repetition is rare in everyday discourse, except in self-repair and utterances which are immediately adjacent to one another. On some of the functions of literary repetition, see Persson (1974); on repetition in children's discourse, see Keenan 1977. Halliday and Hasan (1976) also discuss repetition but mostly lexical, and not propositional, repetition. Note that although paraphrase is defined semantically, this does not mean that it has only semantic functions--as we will see.

[2]The notion of "point" is difficult to define precisely. I'm relying here on an intuitive definition of point as the main message, or comment about a particular topic, that the speaker intends to convey--while recognizing that different levels of cultural, social, and individual meanings (including intentions) will eventually enter into any more precise definition (see, e.g. Polanyi 1979).

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